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SHIPWRECK;

OR

THE STRANDING OF THE WARRENS, OF LONDON,

On the Coast of Labrador, on the morning of the 25th October, 1813; with part of the 70th Regiment on board, bound from Cork to Quebec.

BY ROBERT SANDS.

SCHOOL-MASTER TO THE REGIMENT.



QUEBEC:

Printed at the New Printing-Office,

1814.

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SHIPWRECK:

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THE STANDING OF THE

WARREN OF LONDON.

On the Coast of Labrador, on the morning of the 24th October, 1813: with part of the 70th Regiment on board, bound from Cork to Quebec.



BY ROBERT A. SMITH

LONDON

Printed at the New Printing-Office

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PREFACE.

THOUGH the following Poem bears in some measure the title of a piece of, the celebrated FALCONER's, I, by no means, pretend to give a history of a SHIPWRECK equal to him. He was bred to the sea from his infancy, and had studied the scientific part of seaman-ship with great care and industry, and he describes his voyage in such terms as will do honour to him, both as a man and a seaman, while a taste either for science or fine poetry exists — For my part I have no knowledge of the science, nor even of the terms of seaman-ship, — I was bred to another profession, and in this instance I shall only say, I have endeavoured to cloth facts in poetic language, being determined to adhere to truth more than to the smoothness of versification, though at the same time to lose sight of the common rules of Poetry as seldom as possible.

It was only by the solicitation of a few friends I was induced to publish the following poem. I will not answer for its merits. These I shall leave the public at large to judge of. Every person is, in some degree, fond of his own productions, and was I to say less of myself, I would certainly be accused of the want of candour. I shall therefore acknowledge the charge; but still should I be unsuccessful in this attempt, I trust, I have as much modesty and good sense, as to forbear troubling the world any more with my poetical effusions.

To a candid and generous public I, therefore, leave the present small work; they are at liberty to make their criticisms and to make them freely. I probably may profit by them. I am not so old but I can profit by a good lesson — and shall wish the reader may be in some measure gratified for the trouble he may take in the perusal.

ROBERT SANDS.

QUEBEC, 21st January, 1814.

PREFACE

ALTHOUGH the following Poem bears in some measure the title of a piece of the celebrated L'Alcoran, I by no means pretend to give it history or a narrative equal to him. He was first in the same line of inquiry, and has enriched the world with a number of verses in THE following Poem is respectfully

inscribed to the Commanding Officer and to the other Field Officers, Captains and Subaltern Officers of the Regiment,

By their most obedient

And very humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

It is a candid and generous public I, therefore, leave the great work to you; they are at liberty to make their profit and to make their money. I probably have a good reason for it. I am not a man who can profit by a good lesson. I wish the reader may be in some measure gratified, the noble he may take in the present.

ROBERT SANDS

Quebec, 21st January, 1814.

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THE
SHIPWRECK, &c.

YE favour'd nine who on Parnassus hill
Doth rule your vot'ries by your sacred will;
I prostrate fall upon my bended knee,
And crave one favour you'd bestow on me;
One claim I have, if I am not mistaken,
Because, by Fortune, I have been forsaken—
The jade Misfortune ever follows me,
And from her fangs I never can get free;
But still my spirit, in unbroken tone,
Disdains her frowns and spurns her to begone.

WHEN but a boy I on the sea was cast,
Grip'd by Misfortune most severe and fast,*

* It is something remarkable that the author, though seldom at sea, has had the misfortune to be twice compelled to bear the denomination of a "cast away"—The first time was when he was a boy, of only 15 years of age. He was solicited by a gentleman to go on board a boat to take a pleasure sail and was easily induced to do so. There were five persons on board, and one of them pretended to understand the management of small craft of this kind. When we had rowed out to sea about two miles, we bent a sail, and were to come into the harbour with a fine wind; but alas! the sail had not been up more than five minutes, when the wind suddenly shifted and laid our small vessel on her broad side. The evening immediately preceding the accident, I had been reading an essay of Dr. Franklin's on

~~Till my companions sunk beneath the wave,~~

And found a premature,—a watery grave ;

Thus leaving me upon an oar to ride,

Contending with the storm, the wind and tide,

Reliev'd at last I reach'd my native shore,

Thanks to humanity and to the oar.

Short way alas ! we mortals see in fate,

Nor knows ourselves until it is too late.

I then resolv'd that I no more should be

The sport of fortune on the raging sea,

~~I little know what was reserved in store~~

For me to suffer upon Labrador.

But know, kind reader, in October last,

I on that dismal desert coast was cast,

Along with hundreds bound for Quebec town,

A place of strength and one of some renown,

In August last two hundred men and more

Embark'd with spirit from the Irish shore,

swimming, and his ideas were fresh in my memory. I, therefore, agreeable to his directions, jumped into the water, and consequently saved myself from the pain which one naturally feels on being thrown into that cold element. I swam from the boat towards the sea (for I could not attempt the shore, as it was bold and rocky,) I knew I was too weak to be of any use to my miserable fellow sufferers, and I thought I should, by this means avoid the horrid sight of seeing them perish. I returned towards the boat about 15 minutes afterwards, and the first thing I saw was a boy, younger than myself, lying on the surface in the last agonies of death: a sight shocking to me in the extreme, and one I never shall forget. I then swam towards the boat, and contrary to my expectation found the other three, who were all heavy men, clinging to her and by their weight turning her round on the gun-wale. I swam to the opposite end and succeeded in stopping the boat from her turning, and directed the men how to lay themselves on the gun-wale. There they lay till cold and fatigue forced one after another to drop into the deep to rise no more! The last one who survived, was the person who invited me on board. After falling into the water, he seized me by the skirt of the coat

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On board the Warrens, a most stately ship,
As e'er was launch'd from either dock or slip,
Of the Seventieth Regiment they form'd a part,
Many were active, healthy, young and smart,
All stout and ready orders to obey,
Or face their country's foes by night or day,
Commanded too by one who never fled,
Or slunk from dangers on a downy bed,
But ready ever in his country's cause,
To risk his life for her dear native laws,
The other Chiefs were men of proven merit,
Distinguish'd by a noble manly spirit,
Thus one should think we were from dangers free,
But dangers come which none can e'er foresee ;
This was the case with us that dismal night,
For all were happy, none were in a fright.
For fifty days and something more we cross'd,
Along the ocean by the tempest tost,
Till we arriv'd upon Columbia's shore,
A place which few of us had seen before.
It would be dull, be tedious to relate
Each little story of our dismal fate,

and tore me from the boat. I imagined he had done my business ; but I struggled hard and brought him again to the surface, and placed him in his former situation. There he lay for nearly an hour, when his strength failed and he dropt, leaving me alone, and there I was till a boat coming that way by accident relieved me from my perilous situation, and landed me safely at the harbour. By the time I came there, however, I was nearly in a state of insensibility. I was carried to the first house on the shore, where every thing was done which could be done by humanity for my restoration and comfort, and these endeavours were so successful, that, though it was about 6 o'clock in the afternoon that I was carried into this house, apparently lifeless, I walked to my father's house, a distance of more than half a mile, the next morning by ten o'clock. — This accident happened at Arbroath, on the east coast of Scotland, and the county of Forfar, being the place of my nativity. Happy, indeed, am I that the Labrador business was not so fatal in its consequences.

Suffice it now my countrymen to tell
 No serious accident to us befel,
 Till in the gulph which leads to Quebec shore
 A pilot came—we thought our dangers o'er:
 He gave directions to three-finger'd Jack†
 To keep the ship on such and such a tack,
 But Jack more wise, bore to the starboard side,
 Regardless of reason or of wind or tide,
 And on the twenty-fifth at one o'clock
 Laid ship and us beside a sunken rock,‡
 The sudden noise below the vessel's keel
 Made all on board a sad sensation feel,
 Yet I shall ne'er forget how prudence wrought
 And calm'd the mind and social order brought.
 All rose with freedom and their cloathes put on;
 But none seem'd anxious that they should begone;

† Three-finger'd Jack, the chief mate of the ship,—a very
 assuming gentleman; one who considered himself to be
 always in the right. I happened to be on the watch with
 him the night the accident happened, and as he had before
 worshipped heartily at the shrine of Bacehus, I found it
 almost impossible to avoid a serious rupture with him. I,
 however, did avoid it, after hearing a very great deal of
 insolence, and got down to bed, about twenty minutes
 before the ship run aground. Morpheus had not then visited
 me, and I felt the first stroke like electricity, and naturally
 exclaimed, there is America now with a vengeance! The
 reason he was called Three-fingered Jack, was on account
 that he wanted part of three fingers. Seamen and soldiers
 both gave him this appellation.

‡ It was the most providential thing I ever witnessed, to
 see the ship laid in the place where she was; had she run
 only 8 feet further, she would have been on a sunk rock,
 which most certainly would have beat in her bottom and
 in all probability would have been the cause of the death of
 every person on board. Indeed, the place was completely
 spotted with rocks of this kind, and it was next to a mi-
 racle we escaped running foul of one or other of them.

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Then *Samson** came between the decks and said

" You know the ship upon the shore is laid ;

" But don't despair, I hope the truth I tell,

" When I predict that all will yet be well ;

" The ship is sound and whole in ev'ry part,

" And you may rest assur'd that ev'ry art

" Will still be us'd by those who have command

" To bring you safely to the nearest land ;

" And for my part I pledge my honest word

" I shall all help within my pow'r afford—

" I pledge myself that I shall ne'er seek free

" 'Till on the shore the last man landed be—

" But still be cool, obey those in command

" And be assur'd you'll safely get to land."

This lecture wrought like magic on the ear,

And banish'd ev'ry thought of dangerous fear,

Then all seem'd anxious to display their skill

And all were emulous to shew good will

In helping others from their dreary state

Ere the returning tide made it too late.

During the time that Phœbus had his light

And darken'd all the hemisphere with night ;

The mind was anxious for our future fate ;

But all with patience for the dawn did wait

'Till Phœbus darted o'er the eastern wave

And shew'd the spot where we our lives might save.

Two thousand yards and even something more

Our ship was stranded from Labrador's shore ;

This space was cover'd by the briny sea,

And almost frighten'd hundreds more than me,

Now was the time to try our utmost skill

Now *hope* or *horror* ev'ry mind did fill,

Come brave exertion shew thy utmost parts,

Give life and hope and ease these troubl'd hearts ;

* Mr. Samson, Lieut. and Adjutant of the regiment ; a

gentleman of a most estimable character, and a man of hu-

manity and judgment. It is singular that this gentleman

had a near relation immortalized by Burns, the Scottish

poet. Would to God my weak pen could confer the same

honour on Mr. Samson, I am confident he deserves it.

Then Esculapius' son,† as good as brave,
 With great Mackay did dart upon the wave,
 Fearless of dangers both went to explore
 A place of safety on this barren shore;
 Brave Richards too tho' in a humble sphere
 Did like a man at this sad time appear,
 He from the side into the boat did dart
 And consolation gave to ev'ry heart,
 They strove in vain to stem the ebbing tide
 And lay the boat upon the water's side;
 But sunken rocks and insulated sand
 Would not allow them in the boat to land.
 Then from the boat they wandered to the shore
 And safely landed upon Labrador:
 This once accomplish'd they return'd again
 To give true spirit and to banish pain,
 The booms sure laid upon the vessel's side
 And young and old did dart into the tide,
 Ev'n I, tho' old, did dart into the wave
 And wander'd thro' the deep my life to save.

Stop reader now and contemplate with me
 This scene of misery on the raging sea,
 See hundreds wand'ring, waddling to the shore,
 A place but seldom visited before.
 A place indeed, which sov'reign pow'r ne'er claim'd
 A place but seldom, almost never nam'd,

† Esculapius' Son, the Surgeon, who not only upon this, but upon several other occasions, shewed a dauntless spirit, though at same time guided by wisdom and humanity. Captain M'Kay and him were into the boat, as soon as she was down the ship's side, and they along with serjeant Richards, made good their landing on the shore. It would be vain to praise one officer at the expence of another, for no one could say, who was most active. All were actively employed in one department or another, and it was to these joint and unwearied labours, that the preservation of the people and the ship are, under Providence, to be ascribed. The commanding officer was at this time confined by severe indisposition, his orders were however given with promptitude and executed with judgment.

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See young and old attempt to gain the land
 All leave the vessel in St. Lawrence strand,
 Rank and distinction now are laid aside
 All travel loaded thro' the briny tide,
 E'en female weakness now must strength acquire,
 And age assume the form of youthful fire,
 Suppose all landed on the desert coast
 Sore hurt indeed but not one creature lost.
 Reflection then must take the place of fear
 Now does our state to ev'ry mind appear,
 All drench'd and cold, scarce any thing to eat,
 No house or home our misery complete,
 What shall we do in this sad desperate state
 To find a home and something too to eat,
 The wood our refuge and our cov'ring too
 The scene tho' wretched still 'twas something new.
 See trees in millions tow'ring tow'ring rise
 And almost reaching to the azure skies,
 See millions laid upon their sides by age
 Or by the horrid tempest's stormy rage
 True emblem here of human life and fate
 This forest doth to human nature shew
 Here trees do grow, and here they fade away
 Like us, poor mortals, creatures of a day.
 The moral draw, kind reader, if you can,
 And know that thou thyself art but a man.
 Come now invention, O inspire the brain
 Infuse some comfort, and ah! banish pain,
 Direct our conduct, shew thy utmost skill,
 O guide our minds and regulate our will;
 For now, indeed, 'tis thee that should inspire
 Our ev'ry thought, and be our full desire.
 Here unprovided we must fide away,
 Unless inventive pow'rs should now display.
 See what our wants and happiness doth crave,
 Give us but these, no other will we have.
 The chilling cold reminds us of a fire,
 And thus to gratify the first desire,



Some trees we fell and lay them in a pile,
 Which kindled once, made young and old to smile,
 Reviv'd the spirits and made nature glow,
 And all reliev'd from misery and woe;
 Thus life and health to all at once were giv'n,
 And all did think this forest almost heav'n,
 Now night approaching something else demands
 A covering here in these wild desert lands.
 What shall we do, a house or home to have
 To give us comfort and our lives to save?
 Lord, how my spirit glow'd, when on this shore
 I heard my native tunes play'd o'er and o'er,
 When Charlie Fleming, on his oaten reed,
 Play'd o'er the hills and thro' the woods with speed;
 When Tannahill he did revive to me,
 And Robin Rattfes play'd with mirth and glee.
 The rain now fell in torrents on the trees,
 The wind did fawn us with a gentle breeze,
 While at the fires we snugly all sat round,
 Compos'd and happy on the mossy ground;
 The time mov'd on without the smallest fear,
 Until the sun did in the east appear.
 The ship ere then had shifted from the bed,
 Where most unhappily she had been laid
 And in deep water did in safety ride,
 Unmov'd by storm, by tempest, or by tide.
 Then all prepare to move down to the strand,
 And leave this wild inhospitable land;
 The boats are seen approaching to the shore;
 Now all exult and think their dangers o'er.
 Long did we wander o'er the level beach,
 And fondly hop'd the boats and ship to reach,
 The seamen then their utmost skill did try
 To find a place whereon their boats might lye;
 M'Kay, Drawwater and good Mr. Scott,
 All struggled hard each to secure a boat,
 To save the people from the swelling sea,
 And from this second peril set them free.
 I well remember how the waves did roll,
 And each supported by a wooden pole,
 Did bear the weary trav'lers thro' the tide,
 And laid them softly on the gun-wales side.

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The men, who did the King's commission bear,
 Did one and all like heroes appear.
 The reader knows, at least he ought to know,
 True courage from humanity does flow,
 And that the man who swims the troubled sea,
 To save his fellow must a hero be.
 (This I have witness'd on the ocean wide,
 Where two at once jump'd in the briny tide,
 And sav'd a youth from sinking in the wave,
 When strong exertion only then could save.)
 Three boats now loaded forward did proceed,
 And to the ship now sail'd with rapid speed,
 But what did grieve and fill us all with pain,
 The boats could not that day return again.
 Thus were our friends still left upon the shore,
 To spend another night in Labrador,
 They from the waters to the wood retire
 Again they build, again they kindle fire;
 Some travel forward thro' the barren wood,
 Some walk for pleasure, some in search of food.
 At last a hut a party did descry,
 Whose inmates ran or rather off did fly;
 Unus'd they were to see a human face,
 Except the ancient, the true Indian race,
 Yea probable it is, and something more,
 No stranger had they ever seen before,
 But men like these who know no human crime,
 Are easy pleas'd almost at any time;
 No guilty horrors hang about the heart,
 Nor do they know the least deceitful art;
 A look or motion seeming to be kind,
 At once attracts, at once doth ease the mind.
 This was the case with these good happy men,
 Our tender look caus'd them return again,
 They kindly offer meat and drink to those
 Whom but before they did account their foes.
 Civilization look at this and cry,
 Let tears now drop from ev'ry Christian eye;
 To our disgrace some men to virtue lost,
 Have robb'd, have plunder'd on the British coast;
 Have murder'd those who swam across the wave,
 And stol'n e'en that which swelling seas did save.

Oh ! cursed avarice ! thy wounds are deep,
 And causes thousands more than me to weep ;
 But here on shore our friends we cannot leave,
 Nor suffer them one moment there to grieve ;
 Our grand exertion to bring them on board,
 To save their lives and keep our honest word,
 Must now be us'd, to-morrow this we'll try,
 Humane's the call and dangers we'll defy.
 To-morrow come, the boats again are man'd,
 Again they stretch towards the point of land.
 Now all our friends come down the woody hill,
 Broke up by time and many a turning rill,
 And long they wander'd thro' the briny tide,
 Until they reached where the boats did ride :
 Then male and female both the young and old,
 Got safe on board, tho' drench'd with wet and cold.
 We now exulting in our fortune say,
 We'll forward be by such and such a day.
 But winds did baffle and the tides run so,
 That for some time we could not forward go ;
 At last a fav'rite wind, as I remember,
 Sent us to port on the fourth of November.
 How thankful then should ev'ry one now be,
 That he is sav'd from dangers of the sea.
 'Tis HE that made us can alone preserve,
 And HE's more kind to us than we deserve.
 Else for our sins we'd been from mercy driven,
 Sweep'd from the earth and also banish'd heav'n.
 Let us improve the time which God has lent,
 And seek his love and seriously repent.

 LINES

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LINES written as if in the attitude of standing before the door of the old thief's hole, in the former prison of Arbroath, now the Banking Office, and which thief's hole, was formerly the tomb of a Mr. Ferguson, who was minister in Arbroath, about 150 years ago: written at the desire of my much esteemed friend, Deacon James Alexander, than whom there is not a more honorable or respectable man in the world.

From whence these Stones originally came
Hist'ry records not nor does ancient fame,
But one thing's sure they once did form a part
Of that huge pile, that monument of art,
Whose lofty towers begin to disappear,
The wreck of fire, and each revolving year,
Our fathers burnt it in religious zeal,
And thought no doubt 'twas for the public weal,
Yes, zeal mistaken, did the faggot fire
And burn the abbey in religious ire,
That famous pile which to this day might be,
But for their fury pleasant to be seen,
O Aberbrothock what a loss to thee,
The thought still sickens you and sickens me.
No more digression, come my faithful muse,
O guide my hand, my heart with truth infuse,
While I impart the hist'ry of these Stones,
The tomb of living and of dead men's bones.
A rev'rend priest once liv'd within the town,
Who preach'd the word, and was of some renown,
This honest priest once took took in his head
To build a tomb to cover him when dead,
The place he chose was on St. Thomas floor
One hundred feet from the great entry door,
On the south wall, close by the gothic pile,
And nearly level with the abbey aisle.

There stood the tomb, which thousands yet can tell,
 I've seen the place, and recollect it well,
 There stood the tomb, and there its founder lay,
 Till he was mingled with his parent clay.
 There David Lamb, as fame has publish'd wide,
 Was buried by the rev'rend parson's side.
 There Strawan too while but a youth was laid
 By mard'rous men who thought the lad was dead;
 But Providence who sees all earthly things,
 And often light from utter darkness brings,
 Expos'd his cause, when at the very grave,
 And sav'd his life when none but God could save.
 Before this time the door had long been clos'd;
 There death and darkness were alone repos'd.
 The hoary Sexton now possession takes
 To hold his spades, his mattocks, boards and spakes.
 There Hill the mason wrought with anxious care,
 On winter nights when he the time could spare,
 In cutting stones for placing at the head,
 Of these already number'd with the dead,
 But Smith, base man, whom even but the name,
 Fills Aberbrothock's sons, with lasting shame,
 Contrived a plan and did remove these stones
 From cov'ring dead to cover living bones.
 Thanks to humanity 'tis now again
 Design'd for better use by honest men;
 'Tis not a place where to keep thieves confin'd,
 To keep them out is now the end design'd.
 The Bankers' chest, the great depot of gold,
 Is hither kept, and kept in safest hold.
 O fellow man, think on thy mortal state,
 Thou little know'st what still may be thy fate;
 If thou art rich, yea happy, just and wise,
 Do not the mean, the weak, nor poor despise,
 What is their fate may too alas be thine,
 Their's may be your's, and also too be mine;
 Transitions great are not uncommon things,
 Princes may beg, and beggars may be kings.

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